

Course Syllabus for Government 2305 (10/MW)

"If men were angels, no government would be necessary." – James Madison

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Course objective: Since 1947, the Texas state legislature required that public college and university students complete six semester-hours in American national, state, and local government. The survey course in national government is designed not only to meet that requirement but also to provide you with the basic knowledge and understanding of government activity at the federal level. This course should also give you a better understanding of certain germane disciplines such as history, sociology, philosophy, literature, and economics while preparing you for careers in teaching, public service and the law. You may also benefit from taking a course such as this by not only learning how government affects your life but how you can affect public policy.

Course outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to

1. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of our federal system.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties
6. Analyze the election process.
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens
8. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics.

Textbook: Dye, Thomas R., *Politics in America*, 9th ed.

Course outline: *Politics is the pursuit, and exercise, of power.* (paraphrased – Benjamin Disraeli)

Unit One: Power – (chs. 1, 3, 4, 10, 11, & 13)
Unit Two: Politics: the pursuit of power – (chs. 2 and 5 - 9)
Unit Three: Policy: the exercise of power -- (chs. 12 and 14-18)

Assignments, quizzes, and examinations: During the course of this session, there will be three assignments, eighteen chapter quizzes, and three unit examinations. The unit examinations will open on the following dates: **19 December, 29 December, and 08 January**. Remember that there is a sixty hour window to complete the exams. The assignments and quizzes will occur in between those dates.

Examination make-up policy: Remember that making up a missed examination is a privilege and **NOT** a right! If you have to miss an exam, contact me for further instructions. I reserve the right to have make-ups administered in a proctored situation, such as the OC Testing Center, Student Success Center, or the LRC. Also, keep in mind that there will be **NO make-ups for missed chapter quizzes and/or other assignments!!**

Grading policy: All examinations are equally weighted. The major exams are worth 100 points each, the quizzes are worth 20 points each, and the opening biography & assignments are also worth 20 points. Final semester grades will be based on the following scale: **90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D, and below 60 = F**. To arrive at your semester average, divide the total number of points scored by the total number of possible points (e.g. – 350 total points scored divided by 500 possible points = .70 or 70 which would translate into a C for the semester grade). The total number of available points for this course is 820.

Academic dishonesty: Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated. Suspected cheating or plagiarism may result in a (re)examination in a controlled environment, a failing grade, or dismissal from the course. As per OC Board Policy the option is with the instructor: *In cases of **academic dishonesty**, the instructor has the authority to impose appropriate scholastic penalties.*

Also, keep in mind that once a grade is assigned, it is **final!!!** The need to retain eligibility, please your parents, get into law school, med school, grad school, etc., may be important reasons to change a grade, but they are not valid. A final semester grade is just that – final. The only reason to change a grade would be an error on my part.

Drop/withdrawal policy: The last day to drop/withdraw from this course with a “W” for this session is **Wednesday 04 January**. Dropping and/or withdrawing from the course is a student responsibility. Drops and/or withdrawals after this date are granted only in the most warranted instances and are at the discretion of the instructor.

Special needs: Odessa College complies with Section 504 of the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act and with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. Issues with special needs will be referred to the Office of Disability Services.

Miscellaneous reminders:

- 1) **All e-mail communication will be through OC student e-mail.** While I won't ignore an e-mail from a personal account, all communication originating from me regarding the course will go to your student e-mail account. This is college policy.
- 2) If you run into a problem (taking a quiz, exam, etc.), please notify me right away so that I can correct it asap. Don't hit the back button on your browser while taking the exam as you will (most likely) get kicked off. I will reset the exam for you, but you should know that the test generator will generate a different exam (the same material, but with different questions) each time.
- 3) If resetting exams/quizzes for you becomes chronic (more than twice), I do reserve the right to have you take a paper exam in a proctored situation. Please be careful while taking the exam(s) and make sure that your system requirements meet those required by Blackboard. If you continue to have problems submitting assignments/exams, you might consider downloading the Google Chrome browser. For some reason, Blackboard seems to “play nicer” with Google Chrome rather than with Internet Explorer. Just FYI.
- 4) If you see a **notepad** where your score should be once you've completed your exam, that means that your exam (for whatever reason) wasn't submitted. Contact me asap and I will reset it for you. If you see an **exclamation point** where your grade should be, that means that you've gone over the designated time limit (thirty minutes for the quizzes and 2.5 hours for the unit exams). **Anything beyond ten percent of the assigned time limits (that would be more than three minutes over for the quizzes and eighteen minutes for the unit exams) will result in a two point per minute deduction.**
- 5) Since you don't have to attend lecture and all of the quizzes/exams are “open-book” with more than ample time to complete them (if you are prepared), there is **no** compelling reason to offer “extra-credit” in this course.
- 6) Since there is no lecture component to this course, success is going to largely depend on your reading and comprehension skills. Read and prepare thoroughly. Consider outlining each chapter as you read it. Examine the headings, bold-faced words, and chapter summaries carefully.

- 7) The Student Success Center (inside the LRC) provides computers, tutors, and a good environment to test in. If you run into a (technical) problem, there's someone to help right away. The SSC will maintain reduced hours during the midwinter session, but will be open. Call 432-335-6878 for additional information.
- 8) Again, if you need to contact me, use gfindley@odessa.edu (preferred) or, if it is truly urgent and you need to get in touch right away, call me at home (432-362-7713).